

Message Text

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16

ACTION EA-14

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R 150355Z JAN 74

FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9249

INFO USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, CH

SUBJECT: STRUGGLE IN THE CULTURAL FIELD

SUMMARY. SIGNS OF CONTENTION OVER CULTURAL MATTERS SUGGEST THAT CHIANG CHING REMAINS CLOSE TO THE CENTER OF THE UNFOLDING POLITICAL STRUGGLE. END SUMMARY.

1. PEKING MEDIA ARE GIVING OFF SPARKS FROM A STRUGGLE IN THE CULTURAL AREA. THE LATEST INSTANCE IS THE PEOPLE'S DAILY ARTICLE OF JANUARY 14 WHICH, ACCORDING TO AN AFP REPORT FROM PEKING, ATTACKS THE MUSIC OF BEETHOVEN AND SCHUBERT FOR ITS "BOURGEOIS AND CAPITALIST MENTALITY." WE RECALL THAT WHEN THE PHILADELPHIA SYMPHONY VISITED CHINA, THE CHINESE MADE A SURPRISE REQUEST FOR BEETHOVEN'S SIXTH TO BE SPECIALLY PERFORMED, AND THAT CHIANG CHING GAVE THE NUMBER A STANDING OVATION AND OWNED UP TO HAVING INITIATED THE REQUEST (1973 PEKING 1065). THERE MAY BE SOMETHING IN THE ARTICLE--WE DO NOT YET HAVE THE NEWSPAPER--THAT INSULATES HER, BUT THE CRITICISM SEEMS TO STRIKE CLOSE.

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2. THE CURRENT ISSUE OF RED FLAG (NO. 1) OFFERS ANOTHER GLIMPSE OF THE STRUGGLE. AN ARTICLE ON LITERATURE WHICH EXTENSIVELY PRAISES THE MODEL REVOLUTIONARY OPERAS AS AN AREA OF FIERCE CLASS STRUGGLE MAKES A RARE REFERENCE TO CURRENT CRITICISM IN THE CULTURAL SPHERE. "A NEW CONTENTION APPEARED RECENTLY," THE ARTICLE SAYS, "AN ATTACK ON OUR ALLEGED SCARCITY OF LITERARY WORKS. THIS IS AN EVIL WIND FANNED BY CLASS ENEMIES. IT IS NO SURPRISE THAT THIS PHENOMENON HAS ARISEN. IT IS PRECISELY A REFLECTION OF THE CLASS STRUGGLE IN THE SPHERE OF LITERATURE AND ART." THE ARTS BEING CHIANG CHING'S DOMAIN, THE "NEW CONTENTION" AFFECTS HER ALTHOUGH THE ARTICLE OMITS TO MENTION HER BY NAME.

3. RED FLAG PRAISES THE OPERAS AS "METAPHORICAL TEACHING MATERIAL." WE THINK THE NEWEST OPERA "TUCHUAN MOUNTAIN" IS PARTICULARLY METAPHORIC, AND WE HAVE COMMENTED ON ITS POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS FOR CONTENTION BETWEEN CHIANG CHING AND CHOU EN-LAI. THIS OPERA IS THE SUBJECT OF A FULL PAGE OF COMMENTARY IN THE JANUARY 8 ISSUE OF PEKING'S KUANG MING JIH PAO WHICH FOCUSES ON THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN THE OPERA'S HEROINE (CHIANG CHING) AND ITS HERO (CHOU). THE GIST OF THE COMMENT IS THAT SHE OUTSHINES HIM; SHE IS THE LEADER AND REFORMER, HE IS THE LED AND BEING REFORMED. ONE PASSAGE STANDS OUT: "IT IS IMPERMISSIBLE FOR" HIM "TO STEAL HER SHOW. HOWEVER, WHILE GIVING PROMINENCE TO" HER, "WE CANNOT USE THE SIMPLE METHOD OF WEAKENING" HIM. BOTH CHARACTERS MUST BE TREATED AS HEROIC, BUT SHE IS MORE "SOLID" THAN HE, THE ARTICLE CONCLUDES.

4. WE ARE KEENLY AWARE THAT IT IS TRICKY BUSINESS TO INTERPRET DEVELOPMENTS IN CHINESE POLITICS FROM MATERIAL SUCH AS THIS. BUT THE EVIDENCE PERSUADES US THAT THE SPHERE OF CULTURE IS BEING DRAWN INTO THE CURRENT POLITICAL STRUGGLE AND THAT CHIANG CHING REMAINS VERY NEAR THE VORTEX OF THE STRUGGLE AS IT IS DEVELOPING.
OSBORN

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